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THE PACIFIC: A MEDITERRANEAN IN THE MAKING?

PAUL W. BLANK

ABSTRACT. This article examines the parallels between the developing Pacific Basin and the historical Mediterranean Basin. Humankind's expanding reach in transportation and communication technologies now makes it possible to integrate a basin the size of the Pacific. The Mediterranean provides some insight into the processes involved. Topics include questions of hegemony, "mirror cities" that interact with each other across the basins, and the dynamic tension between cosmopolitanism and localism. *Keywords: hegemony, Mediterranean, mirror cities, Pacific, postmodern Hellenism.*

The arrival of the "Pacific Century" has been proclaimed repeatedly in the popular press and the academy alike. A variety of factors contribute to the current wave of enthusiasm for and interest in the Pacific. United States population movements to the West Coast, with its Pacific orientation, have accelerated since World War II. The rise of Japan as an economic superpower, the dynamism of countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore (referred to in the 1980s as the "Asian Tigers" because of their aggressive economic policies), and, most recently, the emergence of China as a major player in the international economy are heralded as harbingers of an integrated, Pacific-centered society and economy.

The concept of "integration" is a slippery one, subject to a variety of interpretations. One useful definition is that proposed by Jerry Bentley, who describes it as "a historical process that unfolds when interactions influence the development of societies by bringing about divisions of labor and facilitating commercial, biological, and cultural exchanges" (Bentley 1998, 4). Based on these criteria, the Pacific Basin does seem to be experiencing integration on a grand scale.Products designed by a firm in Silicon Valley can be manufactured immediately in its offshore facilities in coastal China or Malaysia. Multilateral direct and indirect investments have become widespread throughout the basin. Cultural integration has accompanied economic integration. Peru now has a president of Japanese extraction, and in the United States the governor of the state of Washington is American-born Chinese.

In 1980, for the first time, the value of transpacific commerce outweighed that of transatlantic commerce. The 1987 stock market crash and recovery hinged as heavily on traders in Tokyo and Hong Kong as it did on their counterparts in New York and London. Although the Asian financial crisis dampened the enthusiasm of some commentators (Warner, Engardio, and Peterson 1999), long-term trends reveal rising levels of production, consumption, and trade throughout the Pacific world. Is a new cultural and economic synthesis in the making?

Historical precedents exist for the integration of sea and ocean basins. The Atlantic Ocean saw the emergence of a cohesive economic system based on the ex-

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change of slaves, cash, and commodities as early as the sixteenth century (Gilroy 1993; Conniff and Davis 1994; Curtin 1998). Even earlier, the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean Basin were scenes of significant cultural and economic interaction (Chaudhuri 1985; Hall 1985; Hourani 1995; Wang 1998).

Of all the world's seas and oceans, the one with the longest history of human interaction and cross-cultural exchange is the Mediterranean. Recent evidence suggests that the Mediterranean witnessed large-scale trade, migration, and interaction as early as the third millennium B.C.E. (Rowlands, Larsen, and Kristiansen 1987; Casson 1991). Mediterranean integration reached its zenith under the Roman Empire, when it experienced political unification for the first and last time (Pounds 1973; Smith 1978). Even after the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean remained a vibrant venue of cultural and economic interaction (Semple 1931; Braudel 1976).

The longevity of the Mediterranean's history of integration makes it the most appropriate candidate for comparison with the emerging Pacific in spite of the vast difference in physical size. Other factors also support such an assertion. Like the Pacific, the Mediterranean accommodated a variety of civilizations along its littoral. The interaction of Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Persian, Carthaginian, and other civilizations across the Mediterranean Basin mirrors the current state of the Pacific, where East and West interact, sometimes peacefully, sometimes not, in a state of constantly shifting but balanced power relationships. Although the Atlantic and Indian Ocean Basins contained their share of developed societies, the power relationships between them were less balanced than were those of the historic Mediterranean or the contemporary Pacific.

Another reason to compare the Pacific with the Mediterranean pertains to humankind's capacity to reduce the friction of distance. Only in the late twentieth century was humanity able to turn the much larger Pacific Basin into a new, Mediterranean-sized basin. Here David Harvey's notion of time-space compression—"processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space that we are forced to alter, in quite revolutionary ways, how we represent the world to ourselves" —comes into play (1989, 240). Before jet aircraft, supertankers, space-based navigation systems, and the Internet, oceanic spaces—whether Atlantic, Pacific, or Indian—were too vast to control effectively. As recently as 1942, when the Battle of Midway decided the issue of control of the Pacific, navies groped blindly for each other over immense expanses.

The Mediterranean, much smaller in scale than the oceans, permitted very close and enduring cultural, political, and economic interactions. Thus I argue that it is to Mediterranean history that we should look to find equivalent processes at work that can match the integration made possible by new transportation and communication technologies. Today the Pacific lies at a threshold. Will it become a new Mediterranean?

The differences between the two basins are obvious. The Mediterranean–Black Sea corridor, though more than 2,000 miles in extent, does not approach the vastness of the Pacific. Structurally, the Mediterranean is a closed basin, with only one

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narrow exit (Gibraltar) into a vaster ocean (before the construction of the Suez Canal). It has a center—the Italian Peninsula—that has served at various times either to bifurcate the region or to unify it. The basin also has a relatively uniform ecosystem, with attendant similarities in human cultural-ecological adaptation.

The Pacific, by contrast, covers more than a third of the globe. A basin closed only at its northern end—a gateway to nowhere—it opens in the south onto the other great oceans of the world. With the exception of the isolated Hawaiian Islands, the Pacific lacks a terrestrial center. Climates and ecosystems range from arctic to tropical. The Pacific does display certain unifying characteristics, among them the El Niño Southern Oscillation and the "Ring of Fire," with its attendant hazards of earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunami. But, due to its enormous size and extent, differences tend to outweigh similarities. Human cultural-ecological adaptation is, not surprisingly, much more varied than is that of the Mediterranean Basin. But for human history, the most important variable has been distance.

Until modern times the Pacific was simply too vast to permit the types of exchanges that led to early cultural and economic synthesis in the Mediterranean. Although Polynesian voyagers are frequently compared with the Phoenicians, and although they covered astounding distances, leaving cultural influences from Madagascar to Rapa Nui, they were unable to play the role the Phoenicians and later Greeks did in the Mediterranean, linking civilizations together and stimulating derivative urban systems. No writer describing the premodern Pacific could echo the famous aphorism of Plato, who, referring to the Mediterranean, said, "Like frogs around a pond we have settled down upon the shores of this sea" (quoted in Semple 1931, 12). Transpacific contacts before the Age of Exploration were sparse, episodic, and, in the words of Jerry Bentley, "on a down-the-line rather than a direct basis" (1998, 6).

During the sixteenth century, however, the expanding reach of Europe began to weave the Pacific Basin into an emerging global economy. The Manila galleon was the first thread to link Asia and the Americas, and this connection expanded in the centuries that followed. Recent research by economic historians debunks the notion that Pacific trade in early modern times was inconsequential. Transpacific silver flows to China equaled or exceeded those that passed across the Atlantic and the Eurasian landmass (Flynn and Giráldez 1995).

Pacific trade may have fallen only in relative terms as the Industrial Revolution intensified the integration of an already-extant Atlantic economy linking the Americas, Europe, Africa, and, by extension, the Indian Ocean, into a commodities nexus. But it was not long after the American settlement of California and the Oregon Territories that transpacific flows began to catch up once again. The "opening" of Japan, the settlement of Australia and New Zealand, the opium trade, and the colonization of Southeast Asia all stimulated mass movements of people, goods, and capital throughout the Pacific Basin.

The process of Pacific integration was abetted by new transportation and communication technologies. Nineteenth-century clipper ships gave way to steam-

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and, later, diesel-powered vessels that moved increasingly large quantities of goods and people throughout the Pacific world. Railroads penetrated hitherto inaccessible continental interiors, making their resources available for global trade. The twentieth century saw the further shrinking of distance as transpacific air travel began to conquer the vast reaches of the ocean. As the twentieth century drew to a close, the Boeing Corporation and its rivals strove to make aircraft that would carry more passengers ever farther in less time and at less cost. Instantaneous communication via telegraph, telephone, telex, fax, e-mail, and the Internet now makes distance irrelevant for many transactions, limited only by differences in time zones. All these developments have created a set of circumstances curiously similar to that which confronted the Mediterranean millennia ago.

The Mediterranean Synthesis

In Western history, the Mediterranean was the incubator of a civilization that both encompassed and transcended its multiple components. In a process that began as early as the Bronze Age, the sea-based polities of the Greeks and the Phoenicians were able to link continental empires, such as those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Hittites, into a larger ecumene. The establishment of regular trade along the Silk Road between the Parthian Empire and Han China in the second century B.C.E. turned the Mediterranean and Black Seas into the western terminus of a new trading system that would link the entire Afro-Eurasian ecumene into a coherent economic nexus.

The flow of goods, people, and ideas across such a vast area served to overcome the isolation and xenophobia of continental empires, tying them into an amorphous but creative mix of cultures and economies. Rather than being entities unto themselves, the civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Mediterranean littoral became cultural and economic subsets of a larger world.

Ruthless but farsighted rulers, from the Persian "King of Kings" to Alexander and Augustus, began to see the potential of uniting these disparate cultures into a unified polity. The history of the ancient world is dominated by the attempts of large empires to absorb smaller independent states. Sometimes the resulting synthesis was a creative one, as evidenced by Achaemenid Persia or the Hellenistic world. At other times absorption meant cultural stasis and the quashing of experimental modes of government and thought, as reputed (by the Greeks) to have befallen the city-states of Ionia after the Persian conquest.[1]

The process of political expansion reached its zenith under the Roman Empire. Augustus was not only the first Roman emperor but also the first ruler to bring the entire Mediterranean littoral under his sway. His successors pushed the boundaries of the empire far into northern and eastern Europe and the Levant. It was no accident that the first and only power to unify the Mediterranean originated on the Italian Peninsula: To control Italy was to control the center. Once the Carthaginians had been subdued and the western half of the Mediterranean Basin placed firmly in Roman hands, the imperial legions could turn their attention eastward. Prior to the

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Romans, no power had controlled both halves of the basin. For centuries Carthage had been master of the west; the Greeks, masters of the east. Rome, the upstart, seized control of the basin in its entirety. Just as some early geopoliticians attributed the power of the United States to its access to two oceans, so the power of Rome may have sprung from its control of these two subseas.

But even the Romans, who ruled the area from what is now Scotland to Egypt, were not able to manage the centrifugal forces engendered by the sheer size and complexity of their empire. Despite the conceit that "all roads lead to Rome," the Roman economy showed signs of significant regionalization and decentralization early in the empire, as Gaul and Spain developed semi-independent economies that traded more with each other and with other provinces of the empire than with Rome itself (Pounds 1973, 158–169).

The collapse of the Roman Empire represented a return to a more common Mediterranean situation, with independent nodes of power and civilization interacting across the basin. During the Middle Ages, power shifted to the margins. This was partly the result of new and larger ships that could traverse the length of the basin without stopping for water and provisions. The decline of Tunis under the Fatimids is attributed to this innovation, which allowed merchants from Pisa, Genoa, and France to trade directly with the Levant, bypassing the North African port (Goitein 1967, 32). In later centuries the Mediterranean Basin saw the rise of the Ottomans in the east and the Spanish Empire in the west. In this sense the Mediterranean resembles the Pacific, which, lacking a center, sees power dispersed along its rim.

Whether Greek or Roman, Spanish, Ottoman, or Venetian, Mediterranean powers participated in a mélange of culture and economy that belied the more glaring differences of politics and religion. This underlying unity persists today, particularly in the ethnological sphere, and makes it possible to speak of a "Mediterranean culture" despite the political, economic, and religious fragmentation of the region (Gilmore 1982).

Humanity has had neither the time nor, until recently, the reach to be able to create the cultural, political, and economic mix in the Pacific that has characterized the Mediterranean. It is not far-fetched, however, to suggest that similar processes are now at work in the Pacific Basin. In addition to those characteristics mentioned earlier, the emerging Pacific has a number of other commonalities with the Mediterranean. Three of the most important shared attributes revolve around the notions of hegemony, "mirror cities," and the dynamic tension between cosmopolitanism and continentality, or "postmodern Hellenism."[2]

Hegemony

When seas and oceans become contested spaces, the dangers associated with piracy and naval warfare have a dampening effect on interaction. If, on the other hand, hegemonic powers are able to enforce peace on the high seas and to maintain the safety of transit, circulation of goods and people will accelerate. This was certainly the case during the centuries of Roman rule, when safe and reliable sea transportation helped

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to integrate the entire Mediterranean into a single cultural and economic space. Pax Romana went hand in hand with Mare Nostrum.

Hegemony abets processes of economic and cultural integration. This stems in part from the tendency for hegemonic powers to stimulate urban growth both by design and by circumstance. In the Mediterranean, the Hellenistic period and the Roman Empire were characterized by the founding of hundreds of new cities and by the expansion of old ones. Enormous movements of people also took place. Population migrations came in the context of military conquest, strategic settlement of veterans on new lands, transport of slaves, and punitive resettlement of restive populations, as well as voluntary travels of traders and other opportunity seekers taking advantage of safer and more efficient roads, passes, and sea-lanes maintained and guarded by the hegemon. As always, cities were magnets for people, production, and trade.

High levels of population movement are not restricted to hegemonic phases of history. Certainly the Mediterranean and other parts of the world witnessed significant cultural mixing in other contexts, including situations of breakdown of the hegemonic authority. The various "barbarian" invasions in Mediterranean history ultimately led to cultural interchange and novel syncretisms, as did the multipolar trade nexus that developed in the Middle Ages.

In Pacific and Mediterranean history, periods of hegemony tended to coincide with significant population movements and cultural mixing. It was the Hellenistic and Roman ages that saw the establishment of the greatest number of cities in the Mediterranean—especially ports—and it was these cities that became the cauldrons of cultural fusion. The streets and alleyways of Rome, Athens, Alexandria, Constantinople, and countless other cities across the Mediterranean teemed with citizens from all parts of the Empire, thrown together, cheek by jowl, by choice, chance, or imperial fiat. This polyglot assortment of ethnicities and religions forged a new identity based on ideologies of triumphal cosmopolitanism, such as those given voice by Virgil.[3]

In the Pacific context, naval hegemony has played a growing role in the development of the basin as an integrated sphere. The arrival of the Spanish on both sides of the basin in the sixteenth century initiated the process of integration. The fragile link established by Spain brought silver across the Pacific and helped establish the Spanish silver dollar as a medium of exchange throughout the basin, but the Pacific was never a Spanish lake (Spate 1979). Distances were still too vast, the scale of operations too small, control too tenuous. Further integration had to await the arrival of the British and, later, the Americans.

Britain's loss of its American colonies led to a strategic "swing to the east," which included the settlement of Australia, the expansion of the China trade, and the exploitation of new opportunities created by independence movements in Latin America. The search for raw materials and markets in the context of industrial capitalism stimulated the settlement and integration of the Pacific under British hegemony.[4] The gold rushes in California, Australia, New Zealand, British Columbia, and

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the Yukon and Klondike not only generated enormous increases in the value of Pacific output but also contributed to the European settlement of both sides of the basin. New commodities generated new markets, which were then linked by steamship, railroad, and telegraph with each other and with Atlantic economies (Jones, Frost, and White 1993, 58–67).

The imbalance between sparsely populated areas of European settlement and densely populated Asian regions led to huge population movements, a racially segmented labor market, and the appearance of enclaves of Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, and Japanese throughout the basin. As in the classical Mediterranean, port cities expanded around the Pacific, each with its own peculiar mix of races and ethnicities. It is no accident that San Francisco and Lima, both major termini for railways built largely with Chinese labor, supported sizable Chinatowns that persist today.

The entry of the United States as a hegemonic power in the Pacific took place under the shadow of a breakdown of the liberal economic order that had characterized Pax Britannica. The celebration of the opening of the Panama Canal—meant to proclaim the emergence of the United States as a two-ocean power—was muted by the outbreak of World War I. In the following decades, global trade contracted as national economies turned in on themselves. Competition for shrinking markets and resources contributed to the outbreak of World War II. The triumph of American arms presaged the eclipse of British naval power and the emergence of a Pax Americana that would reestablish, in altered form, the liberal economic order of the nineteenth century.

With the end of the cold war and the economic reopening of China, conditions became ripe for the resumption of Pacific integration. As in the Hellenistic and Roman Mediterranean, trade and migration have played a decisive role in the growth of port cities around the basin. Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo, Manila, Sydney, Vancouver, Lima, and Los Angeles now rank among the top-tiered world cities, and interaction among them continues to accelerate.

Proponents of the maintenance of American hegemony argue that, despite the opportunity costs represented by a huge defense establishment, U.S. military dominance in the Pacific is necessary to preserve the flow of commerce across the basin. Yet even those who benefit from American protection at times find the rhetoric emanating from Washington unctuous and self-serving. The Japanese, when confronted by American arm twisting over defense or trade, still refer to the *kurobune* (Commodore Perry's "black ships") as a metaphor for unwelcome interference in their affairs. For others, the words and actions of the hegemon appear downright hostile. The sending of aircraft-carrier groups into the Taiwan Strait, for example, justified as a "stabilizing" maneuver by the United States, is seen as another in a long series of violations of Chinese sovereignty by Western powers. Gunboat diplomacy lives on.

"Mirror Cities"

Cities are command-and-control points for states and empires. In the agrarian age, most capital cities were located inland, dominating the surrounding hinterlands and

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acting as collection centers for the surplus generated by the subject populations living within their territories. The sites of the ancient capitals of Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, China, and the civilizations of the Americas all lay well away from the coast.

Port cities presented a conundrum to these sorts of societies. Trade and traders were regarded with suspicion—necessary evils, perhaps, but forces to be kept under strict control to avoid contamination from outside influences. For much of its history China limited trade to a few locations, in particular Canton (Guangzhou), with injunctions against fraternization with foreigners. Similar situations could be found in most agrarian societies.

But port cities did thrive, and, in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, trade-based states developed around these cities, acting as agents of interaction between the self-contained civilizations and the wider world. This role was filled by the Phoenicians and, to a lesser extent, the Greeks in the Bronze Age Mediterranean. In the classical period, Greeks and Phoenicians (in their later incarnation as Carthaginians) dominated the eastern and western halves of the basin, respectively. Greek colonists established cities in southern Italy and Sicily, along the French coast, and elsewhere. The Carthaginians, for their part, played a major role in implanting urban culture in Iberia and North Africa.

During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, some of the greatest entrepôt cities of history were founded, including Alexandria and Constantinople. As intrabasin trade assumed greater importance with growth of the Roman Empire, port cities expanded in size and number. The city of Rome could not have achieved a population approaching 1 million had not the ports of the Mediterranean swarmed with ships laden with grain, wine, and olive oil bound for Ostia, Rome's Mediterranean port. Even after the collapse of the Roman Empire, Mediterranean trade persisted, and many of the port cities founded in the classical age continued to function. Arab, Byzantine, and Norman fleets added to the cultural mix, and the emergence of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa as sea powers heralded the beginning of a new age of Mediterranean commerce.

Port cities command an arc of coastline, dominating a maritime region that may encompass a large bay, a sea, or a stretch of ocean. To survive, they must also control their hinterlands and maintain overland links to the interior. Thus ports look both to sea and to land. A glance at a map of the Mediterranean shows a series of Janus-faced ports. Marseilles commands the Gulf of Lyon and dominates the Rhône Corridor. Genoa owns the Ligurian Sea but to survive must also control the passes overland to Milan and Turin. Rome and Naples vie for influence in the Tyrrhenian Sea while tapping the wealth of the interior. Venice rules serenely over the Adriatic, feeding itself from its mainland territories and moving goods over the Brenner Pass into transalpine Europe. So it goes throughout the Mediterranean Basin—and elsewhere.

Over the centuries the reach and power of certain of these early ports expanded right across the Mediterranean Basin. Athens, subsumed into Alexander's empire, developed a special relationship with Alexandria, the greatest Greek implant on the

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African coast. Rome and Carthage faced each other across the Tyrrhenian Sea, and after the contest between them had been decided in Rome's favor, Latin colonists created a Roman microcosm on the ruins of their former rival. Much later, French colonialism replicated a city of the Midi in Algiers.

Such cities became "mirrors" of each other. The long history of interaction between them produced a special relationship reflected in language, culture, and commerce. An important aspect of this blending was a significant interchange of population, so that residents originating in one city made up a notable portion of the population of the other. Such was the case of Athens and Alexandria in the heyday of Hellenistic culture. So also is the relationship between Marseilles and Algiers today. The flood of European immigrants into Algiers during the colonial period was reflected by a reverse flow of Algerians into Marseilles in the decades after World War II. North African enclaves in the European city mirror European enclaves in the North African city. In some neighborhoods of Marseilles it is difficult to tell whether one is in Europe or North Africa. Before independence, the same could be said of Algiers.

Is the Pacific beginning to see the development of mirror cities as well? Some of its cities show signs of paired destiny. Sections of Vancouver are beginning to look like Hong Kong; and San Francisco, the port that stimulated the opening of Japan, still retains strong links to Tokyo. But the reality of the Pacific is more complex. Once again, geography plays a role. The Mediterranean is long and narrow, and the distance between the northern and southern shore never exceeds 400 miles. Thus a port city extending its sphere of influence in the Mediterranean is likely, sooner or later, to come up against its counterpart across the basin. But to expand into the Pacific is to expand into a void. Distances are great, and cultural and migration flows are multidirectional.

The Spanish linked Manila with Acapulco in the first permanent connection across the basin. In Cavite, the Spanish naval city south of Manila where the galleons were constructed, a dialect stemming from Spanish did become the common tongue. But the tenuous nature of the Acapulco–Cavite link is unlikely to have contributed much to the development of a mirror effect between these two cities. However, the Spanish use of Manila as a springboard into Asia did lead to the development of a Chinese merchant community in the city, and that community was replicated throughout the Chinese-dominated trading nexus of the South China Sea.

Since 1850 Hong Kong has played a unique role as a hub and a funnel for the Chinese diaspora—arguably the most important migration flow in the basin (McKeown 1999). As a result of these population movements, Chinatowns appear in just about every city of significance in the Pacific. But the Chinese were not the only people to move. Japan Towns and Little Saigons, as well as neighborhoods of Filipinos, Koreans, and Pacific Islanders, appear in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Latin America. Even in Japan the presence of Chinese, Filipinos, and Koreans is expanding.

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The presence of Asian communities in Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas reflects a backwash effect of the colonial era, when Europeans living in protected districts in Asian cities exercised economic and political control over Asian societies. The wave of decolonization after World War II resulted in the expulsion of many Europeans. But as trade and economic development proceed, the postcolonial Pacific may see the reappearance of European enclaves in Asian cities, perhaps this time in the context of less-lopsided power arrangements.

The complexity of movement of people across the basin creates a fragmented and refracted pattern of settlement. Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles all maintain relationships of trade, migration, and cross-investment with a variety of cities around the Pacific Basin. Any attempt to constrain their focus to just one or two other cities becomes an exercise in futility. The mark of Pacific integration in the next century may well be the multidirectional exchange of populations across the basin, each reflecting other cities in microcosmic replicas in their urban cores. Although the mirror-city image seems to work well in the Mediterranean, a more apt metaphor for the Pacific may be the kaleidoscope.

Postmodern Hellenism

The Hellenistic period was a seminal epoch of cultural synthesis in the Mediterranean and beyond. In the fourth century B.C.E., Alexander of Macedon embarked on a remarkable series of military campaigns that ranged from the Balkans to India. His conquests united—however tenuously—Greek and Persian cultures. During the following centuries, dynasties founded by Alexander's generals and ruled by Greek elites held sway over Greece, Egypt, Anatolia and the Levant, Mesopotamia, Persia, and parts of Central Asia.

Koine Greek became the universal language of commerce, learning, and administration throughout these vast territories, and Greek-speaking elites were at home in all the great cities of the region. The fluid forms of Hellenistic art and sculpture appeared as far afield as India and China. When the Romans moved into the eastern Mediterranean they were able to appropriate and absorb a vibrant Hellenistic civilization that retained its Greek character throughout the Roman era and well beyond. In truth, with the demise of the empire in the west and the rise of the Byzantine Empire in the east, Greece in effect "became" Rome.

Although Hellenism represented a triumph of cosmopolitanism, it had its darker side. Across the vast reaches of the Hellenic world, peasants were mired in grinding poverty and exploited for the benefit of the Greek urban elites. They did not participate in the flowering of Hellenism but retained their own languages and belief systems, isolated in cultural backwaters that were worlds away from the brilliance of the cities. In these areas, Hellenism formed a thin veneer that affected the lives of people mostly in a negative way.

The contemporary world in many ways replicates Hellenism. As in the Hellenistic period, the world of today is cosmopolitan, with elites traversing the globe and speaking the universal language of commerce and technology. But the new era of

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globalization has not yet lived up to its promise to most of the world's people, who, like the populations under Greek control, struggle just to survive, prevented by distance, language, and, indeed, the very nature of the system itself from partaking of the fruits of progress.[5]

In the "postmodern" Pacific this global dynamic plays itself out in several ways. In the great cities of the Pacific Basin, cell-phone-toting entrepreneurs lock in investment deals, multinational corporations build factories and gleaming corporate headquarters, and a universal youth culture responds to the symbols of corporate consumerism. English replicates Koine Greek as the common language and is spoken as a second language by hundreds of millions of people. The venture capitalists of Silicon Valley are as likely to be of Chinese or Indian origin as European. The cultural and economic elites are as cosmopolitan as were Hellenistic Greeks.

But old divisions remain and are, in fact, intensifying. The impoverished peasant populations of Asia and Latin America serve largely as reserves of labor to be tapped for industrial investment. The gap between those with English-language and technological competence and those without becomes a yawning chasm in the information economy. And despite the conquest of distance, old geographical realities reassert themselves. The coasts remain ahead of the continental interiors, which view them with jaundiced eyes. The old guard of the Communist Party in Beijing regards coastal Chinese entrepreneurs with suspicion. So also does the conservative American hinterland deride and envy "California culture." The jury is still out on late-industrial capitalism and its ability to include all in its bounty. But the barriers of culture and place are likely to be as stubborn in the postmodern Pacific as they were in the Hellenistic Mediterranean.

Conclusion

Is the Pacific a Mediterranean in the making? The arguments presented here suggest a complicated "yes-and-no" answer to this question. Differences between the two basins in structure, scale, and historical circumstance abound. Yet there are also significant similarities. The issue of scale, which in previous centuries made all the difference, has become increasingly irrelevant as new transportation and communication technologies shrink distance. Structural dissimilarities persist, however, and it is unlikely that anything resembling the Roman Empire could emerge in a basin lacking a terra firma core. The "kaleidoscope cities" of the Pacific are in reality imperfect replicas of the Mediterranean's "mirror cities." But the processes of urbanization, trade, migration, and cultural exchange that today bind the Pacific into a new cultural and economic entity are very recognizable from the historic Mediterranean.

The Pacific is the greatest of the world oceans, and it is hardly surprising that it should be the last marine basin to be brought into the reach of a world system. The integration of the Pacific takes place in the context of resumption of a global expansion that was interrupted by two world wars and the stasis of the cold war. The players are new. British hegemony has given way to American, and whereas the

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nineteenth-century world system focused on the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, now all eyes are on the Pacific.

The Mediterranean has a long history of human interaction, and it was the first significant sea basin to undergo the processes of interchange and integration that have now extended to the global arena. Humankind has achieved a mastery of distance that now puts the Pacific on the threshold of a similar cultural and economic synthesis. If the Pacific does become another Mediterranean, its evolution will be a long one, but the resulting amalgam will most likely be long lasting.

Notes

1. The classical period saw the same type of conflict as that which exists today between universalizing, expansionist powers and local cultures trying desperately to maintain their independence and individuality. The Achaemenid rulers portrayed themselves as bringing the glories of Persian civilization and order to wild and lawless populations, whereas the Greeks fought ferociously to avoid becoming subjects of an "oriental despotism." The history of classical Greece is fascinating in part because the Greeks themselves experienced these issues from all sides. Although the Hellenic League pulled disparate city-states together to repel the Persian threat in the fifth century B.C.E., less than two centuries later the Greeks under Alexander had embarked on the path of world mastery. They also produced magnificent rhetoric to justify whatever role they played.

2. This concept was formulated by my colleague William Herbrechtsmeier, of the Department of Religious Studies, Humboldt State University.

3. The Indian Ocean also developed into an exchange network in the absence of a dominant power. Traders from Arabia, India, and Southeast Asia linked the coasts of East Africa, Arabia, India, and the Indonesian Archipelago. Likewise, the forced migration of millions of Africans as part of the development of the "Atlantic economy" of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries took place more often than not across contested seas. The doctrine of "no peace beyond the line" may have encouraged its share of freebooting, but it did not squelch commerce, either in goods or in human beings.

4. Hegemony is seldom if ever absolute. Although the British Royal Navy was undoubtedly the most formidable force to patrol the world's seas in the nineteenth century, there was no shortage of rivals and challengers. American "black ships" under Commodore Perry forced Japan to deal with the outside world on different terms, and the presence of British, Japanese, and German naval squadrons lurking in the waters off the Philippines did much to impel President McKinley's decision to "protect" rather than "liberate" the Filipinos at the end of the nineteenth century. Likewise, the end of the twentieth century saw the United States, despite its overwhelming military advantages, needing to act in coalition with its allies. Multiple players invariably fill the stage, even when one character tends to dominate the action.

5. Today the triumphalist rhetoric of globalization—often associated with Americanization—is countered by the discourse of resistance, whether from antiglobalist forces within the developed world or from religious fundamentalism in Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist civilizations. One of the rallying cries of the Iranian Revolution was to cleanse the nation of "Westoxication." Post–cold war voices in the triumphalist mode include Francis Fukuyama (1992), David Landes (1998), and Thomas Friedman (1999). Less sanguine interpretations include those of Samuel Huntington (1993) and Arjun Appadurai (1996).

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